



South Carolina  
Department of Education

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# **Modernizing the Education Accountability Act**

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# **Modernizing the Education Accountability Act**

## **The Goal**

A student-centered, state-based, unified, and transparent system of student, educator, school, and district accountability that promotes student achievement, informs stakeholders, improves instructional practices, rewards excellence, and identifies low-performing schools and districts so appropriate interventions and supports can be provided.

# Modernizing the Education Accountability Act

## Who Benefits from Modernization?

It's in the best interests of students and parents.

- A student-centered focus improves student outcomes.

It's in the best interests of teachers and principals.

- A focus on student outcomes drives improvements in instructional practices.

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## Who Benefits from Modernization?

It's in the best interests of district superintendents and school boards.

- Measuring the effectiveness of instructional practices supports informed decision making about allocating resources.

It's in the best interests of policy makers, taxpayers, and community stakeholders.

- Transparent reporting of performance supports informed decision making about public policy.

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## **Principles for Modernization**

Adopt a student-centered system using fair, valid, and reliable measures of student achievement and student growth.

Develop a unified system compliant with state and federal law.

Use a transparent system that reports an overall performance rating that is easily understood by all stakeholders and that holds student, educators, schools, and districts accountable for the learning of all students.

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## Key Components of Modernization

Use letter grades (A, B, C, D, F) to report school and district performance. 12+ states currently use or plan to implement A-F reporting.

Incorporate a growth component as part of the overall performance rating, rather than 2 ratings: absolute and growth.

Report and hold schools and districts accountable for the performance of all subgroups: all-students and the ESEA Waiver subgroups.



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## Key Components of Modernization

Report 5 levels of student performance (for example, Unsatisfactory, Below Average, Average, Above Average, Excellent).

Use mean scores rather than the percent proficient.

Use graduation rates, PASS scores, end of course exams, and common core assessment data, as well as percent tested in English and math as part of a school or district accountability matrix.

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## Key Components of Modernization

Report a 1-year letter grade and a 3-year rolling average letter grade to provide short and medium term analysis.

Eliminate Historically Underperforming Group (HUG) and “safe harbors” adjustments.

Maintain a consistent accountability manual that doesn’t change year to year.

Publicly recognize the highest performing schools and districts and those with the largest gains.



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## Key Components of Modernization

Publicly identify schools and districts that meet minimum expectations (a grade of C) but whose performance is regressing (an Early Warning list).

Publicly identify the lowest performing schools and districts, and those with the widest achievement gaps.

Target state interventions to the lowest performing 5% of schools and the bottom 10% of schools with the widest achievement gaps.

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## **Establish a New State Intervention**

The three current state intervention options (provide assistance, replace the principal, SCDE takes over the school) have been ineffective in producing transformative change in perennially low-performing schools.

Create the South Carolina Transformation School District.

Model it after similar special districts in Louisiana (Recovery District), Tennessee (Achievement District), and Michigan (Education Achievement Authority).

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## **SC Transformation School District (SCTSD)**

Separate the SCTSD from the SCDE and State Board of Education.

Require 5-year transformation plans.

Operate schools with flexibility like charter schools (e.g. at-will employment).

Require the school to report to the SCTSD superintendent, not the local school district.

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## SC Transformation School District

Require the SCTSD superintendent to make a recommendation to the SCDE and the SBE during the school's 4th year:

- Return the school to the local school district;
- Convert the school to a public charter school;
- Continue in the SCTSD; or
- Close the school.

Fund schools in the SCTSD with local, state, and federal dollars (the money follows the child).

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## Other Modernization Concepts

Eliminate the current high school exit exam as a requirement for high school graduation.

Eliminate end of course exams for English 1 and Algebra 1.

Substitute the common core 11th grade assessment instead for these three exams.

Repurpose funds from the exit exam and the end of course exams to provide every student one ACT exam and one WorkKeys exam at least 2 semesters prior to expected high school graduation.

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## Other Modernization Concepts

Restructure the standard high school program to 20 credits.

Offer two endorsements for high school students: a technical or career endorsement for 22 credits; a college-prep or advanced endorsement for 24 credits.

Require all students to take at least 1 virtual course for high school graduation.

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## Other Modernization Concepts

Permit students to earn credits by demonstrating proficiency rather than accruing seat time.

Create a program of study for students with disabilities that leads to a standard high school diploma (North Carolina model).

Establish two promotion gateways for students based on reading mastery at the end of 3rd grade and 7th grade (Florida model).

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## **Causes For Optimism**

Nationwide there is a groundswell of support for reform of an agrarian-based model of education that has existed in this country for nearly 150 years.

Technology is opening up opportunities to tailor learning strategies to individual learning styles, and to tailor curricula to meet individual needs and timelines.

The education system doesn't need reform; it needs to be transformed. Holistic systemic changes are essential.